

HISTORICAL FACTS OF THE CITY OF BELLAIRE, OHIO

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Fraternal Order of Police
Belmont Lodge No. 58

The west side of Ohio was once covered by dense forests and was inhabited by ferocious Indians who made it hard for settlers to gain a foot-hold. John Duer settled where Bellaire now stands in 1795, having a grant from the land office in Steubenville, but on July 3rd, of that year, he sold his rights to John Buchanan, who willed it to his three sons. In 1802, two sons sold their interest to Jacob Davis, an emigrant from Hartford County, Maryland, where his old home was called Bell Air. The third son later sold his land, which was south of Indian Run, to John Rodefer. Six log cabins had been built by 1832, when Mr. Davis conceived the idea that he owned an advantageous site for a town and laid out six acres in lots. This original town extended from twenty-third street to McMahon's Creek, and from the river to just west of Belmont street. The principal thoroughfare and line of communication with the outside world was the "Indian Trail," the Zane Highway. Over it mail was brought weekly by a rider going to Woodsfield; later boats brought it every other day. Pultney, now Shadyside, and which was Belmont County's first County Seat, (until 1804) was the seat of the postal business until 1841. A warehouse, the first building of any importance, was built by Archer and Long in 1837, and the first Church was held in a cooper shop. The first Church (Methodist) and the first school were built near 27th and Union streets in 1839.

Bellaire became a shipping center. Flour from as far out the valley as Glencoe, and distillery products from round about were shipped down the river. The latter went to foreign markets and was the chief cash product. The first mine was opened south of Bellaire by John Fink in 1830, and he created a genuine sensation by shipping a load to Maysville, Ky., and then to New Orleans, which made him the pioneer in long distance coal shipping. He was soon joined by the Heatheringtons. ✕

The B. & O. Railway was completed to Wheeling in 1852, and the Central Ohio (now B. & O.) to Bellaire from Columbus in 1854. Goods crossed the river by ferry until the stone bridge was built between 1865 and 1870. This bridge is three-fourths of a mile long and cost \$1,250,000. Stone for it was cut where the City Park now stands. John Sullivan, who deserves credit for bringing the C. & O. to Bellaire, promoted the B. Z. & C. (later the O. R. & W.) on which in 1879 one could hail trains as we do buses today. The Cleveland and Pittsburgh railway (now Pennsylvania) was extended to Bellaire in 1856.

Bellaire was a little village and railroad terminus at the end of the Civil War but it was incorporated about 1860 when its name was changed to Bellaire. It was ushered in a twenty-five year period of prosperity which ended when many industries were lured away by promises of cheap natural gas, free factory sites, etc., in northwest Ohio and Indiana. Gradually the city recovered from this "commercial paralysis" until by 1912 it was better off than before. There were fewer industries, but the capital invested and payrolls were greater, and the production was 50 per cent higher. Few towns could have recovered from such reverse.